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## CALGARY

# Opponents of contentious Springbank Dam present petitions against project



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Opponents of a proposed flood mitigation project that's slated to be constructed west of Calgary presented hundreds of petitions against the dry reservoir during a Monday morning meeting in Redwood Meadows.

President of the Springbank Community Association, Karin Hunter handed over 842 individually signed petitions to UCP MLA for Banff-Kananaskis, Miranda Rosin.

Hunter has been a strong advocate against the project and has been gathering community support over the last year.

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The hope is to have the dam moved to McLean Creek.

"This is not just about flood, this is about water management," Hunter said.

"This project could be up to a billion dollars for one community, with one outcome that should work most of the time — it seems like a waste when people out here are saying we'd love a water reservoir at McLean Creek like was proposed in the original decision.

Instead, the province has its sights set on the Springbank Off-Stream Reservoir (SRI), which is 15 kilometres west of Calgary, between Highway 8 and the Trans-Canada Highway and east of Highway 22. It would have the capacity to temporarily store about 78 million cubic metres of water, roughly the equivalent of 28,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

The location does not sit well with community members in Redwood Meadows, Springbank, the MD of Rocky View and the Tsuut'ina Nation. The First Nation is just 400 metres north of the proposed site of the project and community leaders fear the spillway of the reservoir could have a big impact on its land.

Petitioners also argue that the dam would exceed air quality guidelines as the reservoir drains.

Additional concerns included repeated destruction to fish, wetlands dens, nest and elk habitat in the area.

Retired geophysicist, Dave Klepacki notes that the land would extensively be damaged once it's flooded.

"When you flood it, it gets covered with mud and you have to flood it every five years to make sure that the off-stream reservoir system works, so the grass and bushes will never grow back and essentially the land will be permanently scarred," he said.

"When you release that water every five years, it's a large shallow reservoir and that water will likely have blue algae and so you'll send all that downstream and cost the City of Calgary almost double."

Speaking of cost, UCP MLA Miranda Rosin agrees that McLean Creek would be a cheaper option and would be a stronger alternative.

In a letter addressed to Transportation Minister Ric McIver, Rosin stated that the McLean Creek option 'could protect all of our upstream communities.'"

Rosin's letter noted that "consultation is something that has never been adequately done since the project was first introduced six years ago."

It's already taken years for regulators to review the current Springbank Dam project with still no answer as to whether it would gain approval from regulators.

There's concerns that moving the project to McLean Creek would take just as long, but Rosin says that's not the case.

"Regulatory approval doesn't need to take seven years, it just needs to take government action and government commitment to working on the file so I do believe that if McLean Creek were to be properly assessed that our government could take the same quick and swift action on this file as we did on SRI."

"I do not believe that McLean Creek is going to delay this project another decade."

Regardless of the regulatory delays, the UCP are still moving forward with the contentious Springbank dam project.

It's unclear when shovels could hit the ground but a federal review could be complete within nine months, following an 8,000 page submission by the province in response to regulator's questions this past summer.

The document was presented to the federal Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA), Alberta Environment and Parks, and the Natural Resources Conservation Board to

offer some clarity on potential impacts to the environment, along with benefits and costs.

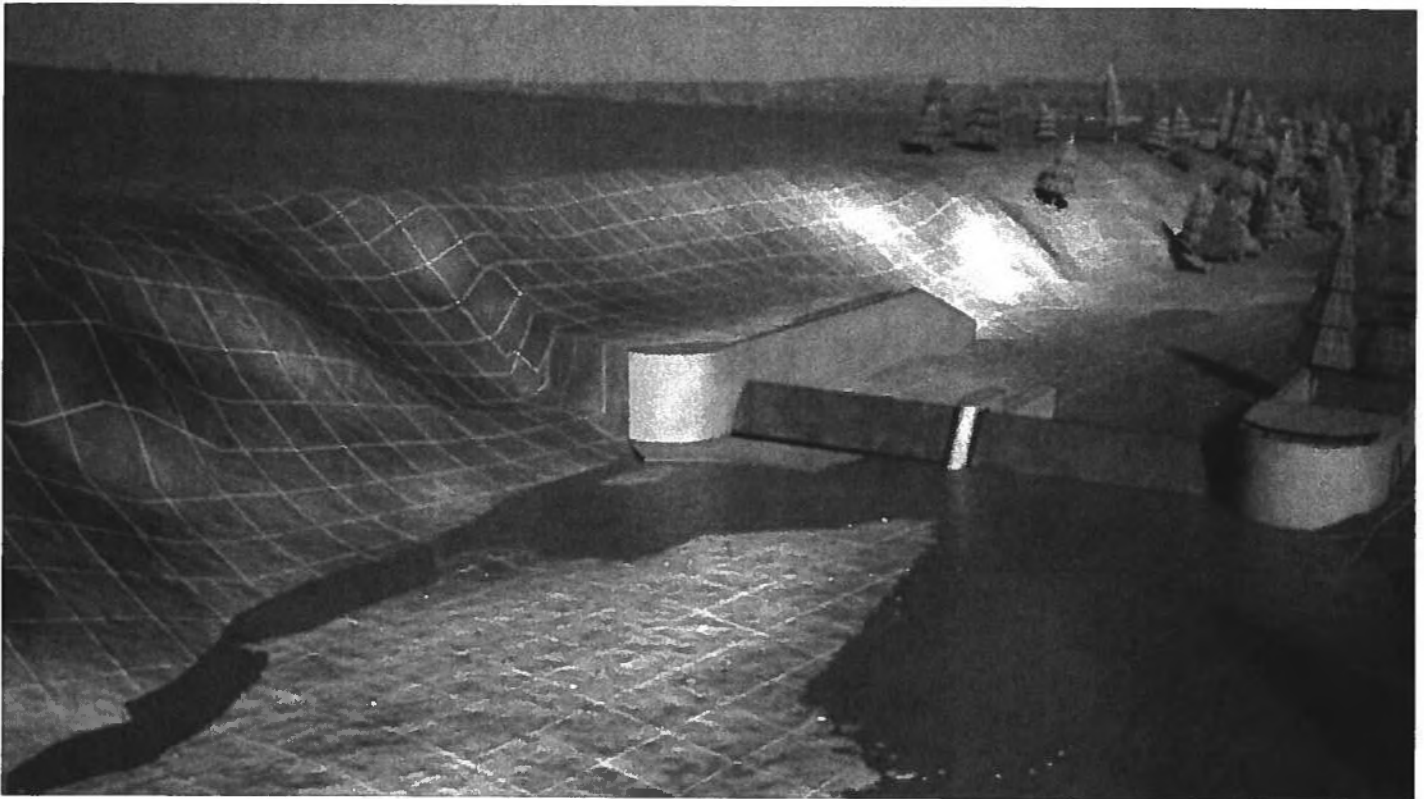
CEAA has promised to engage with the public prior to a final decision on the Springbank Reservoir, but offered no clear timeline of when that could happen.

McIver says flood mitigation is very important for the City of Calgary and the province should have no intention of "dragging its heels."

The province has already purchased 20 per cent of the land needed for the Springbank Dam project budget at a total cost of \$432 million.

The Calgary River Communities Action Group suggested the earliest the project could be finished would be sometime around 2023.

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